

“When I Cannot Still the Longing of My Heart”; Third-Culture Displacement and the Image of the Child in Allen Say’s *Tree of Cranes* and *Grandfather’s Journey*
by Hannah Swamidoss

In his picture book *Tree of Cranes* (1991), Allen Say creates a poignant moment when his protagonist, a little boy, understands that his mother’s act of decorating a pine tree represents her childhood memories of Christmas. Say’s beautiful illustration shows the young boy sitting on his mother’s lap, and the serene pleasure with which both mother and child gaze at the tree and the warm closeness that they share resemble depictions of the Madonna and child. Ironically, the majority of the pictorial narrative—nine of the fourteen images in which the boy appears—does not echo this closeness but instead presents images of an isolated child. The first illustration and text reveal that the boy chooses to be alone, but for much of the narrative, the boy wishes to understand his mother’s mysterious actions, and Say depicts him watching her through doors and windows. The child’s displacement from his mother’s activities, his subsequent placement with her (both emotionally and physically as he sits on her lap), and then the final image of him once again alone, all emphasize the complicated interplay between placement and displacement. A subtle element of cultural interaction also enters in the movement between displacement and placement; the mother’s American childhood, different from the boy’s Japanese childhood, finds a place when she creates the tree. After the moment of intense closeness with the mother, the boy, once again alone, carries a kite. The very Japanese kite, however, represents the final act of the mother’s memory of Christmas and her American childhood. The solitary figure of the child, consequently, has a new *cultural* placement as he holds the kite, which embodies the twin aspects of his heritage.

This use of the solitary figure of the child and the complex interaction between cultural displacement and placement occurs repeatedly in Say’s other picture books as well; Say consistently plays with the ideas of displacement and placement in cultures to explore themes of identity, belonging, and home. Isolation, however, does not necessarily have a negative connotation in these texts; instead, the state of “aloneness” offers room for understanding or resolution to questions of identity and belonging. Critical attention to Say’s work reflects his interest in these themes of isolation, identity, belonging, and home. Ann Charters, for instance, states: “If a sense of rootlessness permeates Say’s books, it is a gently melancholic, philosophic condition rather than a desperate angst about his Japanese-American identity” (255). In comparing two of Say’s works that deal with cross-cultural interaction, *Grandfather’s Journey* (1993) and *Tea with Milk* (1999), Margaret Moorman does not see melancholy in the cultural juxtaposition but adventure. Moorman observes that “Allen Say’s family history as told in his two companion books somehow makes for intensely memorable reading, as he records the individual longings, losses, compromises and triumphs of lives lived between the poles of adventure and tradition (n.p.). Roger Sutton perceptively comments on Say’s interest in portraying the individual as alone and draws in both ideas of melancholy and adventure; Sutton notes, “For Say’s picture-book heroes, isolation is both alienating and liberating. It allows Billy Wong, too short to play American basketball, to remake himself as a Spanish bullfighter in ‘El Chino.’ It caused Say’s grandfather to leave Japan and look for himself in America [...]” (n.p.). In the context of this paradoxical nature of isolation which bestows agency yet indicates “otherness,” I find the concept of “third culture,” a concept in social theory which explains cultural displacement within individuals and the ramifications of such displacement, particularly

useful in analyzing Say's work as this term offers a means of understanding individuals caught between cultures.

Third-Culture Displacement, Identity, and the Elusive Concept of Home

Sociologists John and Ruth Useem, a husband and wife team, studied interactions between expatriate Americans and Indians in newly independent India and began to use the term “third culture” to explain these interactions. John Useem uses the terms “first” and “second” cultures to represent Indian and American cultures and the term “third culture” to represent the interactions between the two. Useem sees the third culture offering a necessary and mutual space for cultural interaction (147). In her study of expatriate American wives, Ruth Useem adds the idea that that the third culture “is changing culture, highly protean within a rather firm outline” (135). Building on the idea of the facilitation of cultural exchange in the space between cultures, Ruth Useem introduces the concept of differing uses of power by individuals placed within particular third-culture spaces. The model of third-culture displacement does not imply that the two (or more) cultures that the third-culture individual finds himself/herself in-between have homogeneous qualities; rather the third-culture paradigm points to the interstitial spaces within a culture and between cultures as important sites of identity formation and the agency such spaces can provide.

In later work, Ruth Useem and Richard Downie begin to discuss third culture as an interior state found within the individual, in this case the expatriate child. Expatriate children found themselves living between the first culture of their parents and the second culture of the host country; the children's displacement from both cultures resulted in an *interior* “third culture” (103). David Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken further explicate the strengths and weaknesses of this “culture between cultures” (20). They and other theorists noted the difficulty in identifying “home” and a sense of belonging and the prevalence of a sense of being rootless and a “migratory instinct” (McLachlan 15). Yet the concept also opens up the possibilities of a “portable home” and the strengths and the advantages of mobility (McLachlan 15). Ruth Useem, Pollock, and Reken began to account for more types of experience (outside expatriate experience) that could create third-culture displacement; the “protean” nature continued, while the third culture remained recognizable. More recently, K. B. Eakin's *According to My Passport, I'm Coming Home* (U. S. Department of State, 1998) offers resources for third-culture individuals, and Denise A Bonebright in “Adult Third Culture Kids: HRD Challenges and Opportunities” (2009) suggests that an appropriate venue for adults who struggle with a lack of belonging would be careers that include an international component.

Say's own cross-cultural experience of living in Japan and the United States, of course, relates to the concept of third culture, particularly in the “migratory instinct” and the loss of roots seen in his narratives that have biographical elements. To better situate Say's work in the context of this social theory and cultural studies, however, I would like to briefly look at Homi Bhabha's description of cultural interstices in *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha argues that theory should “think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (2), and that “these ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (2). Bhabha insightfully identifies the

interstitial space as producing “singular or communal” identities, and the third-culture paradigm provides the means to understand such subject formation. The interior displacement present in third-culture individuals provides the site and location for identity formation, and this identity proves to be singular to the point that it does not propagate itself. Instead of such interstitial spaces disappearing because of their very singularity, the increase in cultural interaction and exchange creates new interstitial sites of identity formation. Bhabha also points to the dynamic, ongoing nature of such identity formation, and certainly, the third-culture model demonstrates mobility, alterity, and agency. The third-culture paradigm better accounts for Say’s exploration of cultural dislocation and individual displacement than the traditional categories of narratives of exile or diaspora because it accounts for cultural hybridity which occurs *before* the character has left the culture of origin and problematizes the sense of a “home lost” when free movement and access occurs between the different cultural “homes.” With respect to this aspect of Say’s work, Stuart Hall’s distinction between fixed cultural identities which suggest a false uniformity and a more fluid cultural identity which notes differences has great significance. Hall states: “Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (394). Through its focus on cultural displacement, the third-culture model demonstrates that Hall’s idea of “continuous ‘play’” takes a major role in Say’s books.

Examining Say’s work on immigrant and cross-cultural experience in the context of the concept of “third culture” from social theory demonstrates that the themes of displacement and placement frequently point to the gaps between cultures, and the interior displacement that characters experience reveals their own interstitial nature. I also see the third-culture model of displacement accounting for both the written story and the illustrations of Say’s narratives: the interstitial space occurs in both Say’s written text and pictorial narrative. In her analysis of Say’s illustrations, Christina Desai argues that “appreciation for Say’s work tends to focus on his insights into living in two cultures” (410) and that consequently “attention to the cross-cultural aspects of his books has somewhat overshadowed an appreciation for his innovative use of illustration and other (noncultural) [sic] influences on his characters’ development, such as their artistic drive” (410).¹ I, however, find that Say’s illustrations in the texts that explore immigrant or cross-cultural experience also emphasize ideas of displacement and placement and the role of the interstitial space. Frequently Say places the figure of the child in a liminal, interstitial space such as bridges, boats, passages, doorways, and windows or with objects that have interstitial attributes. The child’s aloneness in Say’s illustrations does not arise from merely being the only human in the illustration; rather, Say’s complicates the pictorial narrative of the isolated child through the placement of the child in interstitial spaces or with interstitial objects. The third-culture model of displacement also better accounts for the sense of loss that persists in many of these texts. To better demonstrate the occurrence of third-culture displacement in Say’s work, I will look at different aspects of *Tree of Cranes* and *Grandfather’s Journey*.

¹ Violet Harris in her examination of cultural authenticity in multicultural literature notes that Say “has written about his discomfort with ‘identity’ issues. He discussed further how he reconciled his heritage with his artistic sensibilities and the expectations of others. Say’s primary concerns are artistic and literary excellence, not his or his readers’ race or ethnicity” (123). While it is not within the scope of this present article, I believe that Say’s interest in cultural displacement translates into other forms of displacement in his other works – the displacement of age for instance in *Stranger in the Mirror* (1995) and the displacement of dreams to work out conflicts seen in *The Boy in the Garden* (2010) and *A River Dream* (1988).

The Frequently Occurring Interstitial Space

One of the many interesting aspects of Say's depiction of isolation and displacement in his picture books lies in the traditional audience for picture books: children and particularly young children. Undoubtedly, adults reading the book to or with the child also form this audience, but children remain the primary audience. Jerry Phillips and Ian Wojcik-Andrews argue that the way children play in narratives create ideological positions in children's literature. Phillips and Wojcik-Andrews propose that "Play is a politics—it inculcates gender, class, ethnicity, and their attendant codes of social behavior" (54). By consistently depicting the child playing alone in *Tree of Cranes* and *Grandfather's Journey*, Say does offer "codes of behavior" and a stance on culture. The constant image of the isolation of the protagonists in these books suggests that the frequent occurrence of the interstitial space makes it a common cultural occurrence and the alienation that it emphasizes between the protagonist and other characters offers both loss and agency. Ironically, through the medium of a picture book that normally brings the child reader in contact with other children and/or adults, these narratives suggest that displacement plays a major role in social formations of families and countries and that cultural placement, even if not actively sought after, has premier value.

Tree of Cranes begins with the image of the child sitting on one of the round stepping stones of a bridge that winds across a pond. Bridges, while connecting gaps between two fixed locations, do not belong completely belong to either place; bridges vividly bring out the intricacies of the interstitial space. Say's illustration further exemplifies the in-between nature of bridges: the stepping stones while in easy distance of each other do not connect, leaving even more gaps, and the beginning and end of the bridge do not stand out clearly. Likewise, the boy does not use the bridge to arrive at a fixed location or leave another, but instead kneels on one of the stones and pokes a stick into the water. The illustration emphasizes the child's aloneness through colors as well. The boy, for instance, embraces the interstitial qualities of the bridge; he uses the bridge not to gain access to fixed locations but to the *gaps* it covers. The boy's bright red scarf, blue coat, and brown shoes, however, make him stand out from the gray of the bridge and the neutral grayish green of the water; Say's use of color makes the boy doubly displaced. In the next illustrations, Say consistently depicts the boy in passageways (which function much like the bridge connecting one fixed space to another) and the liminal spaces of doorways and windows. The child standing in a doorway or leaning through a window again captures the in-between spaces of ordinary objects and events, but also the distance between him and his mother because he does not venture into the room. The boy's separation from his mother despite his close proximity to her build up to the scene where he sits on her lap, and displacement, momentarily, disappears.

In *Grandfather's Journey*, Say uses the more forceful images of a ship and a train to represent being in-between, but once again, these means of transport, while powerful, occur in the ordinary realm of life. The second illustration of the narrative shows the narrator's grandfather framed against the railing of a ship. The choppy waves angled against the lines of the ship explain why the grandfather needs to hold on to his bowler hat. Say makes this illustration particularly interesting by depicting the grandfather as a boy wearing adult clothes too large for

him.² These clothes function in a manner similar to the clothing of the boy in *Tree of Cranes*; the clothes show the figure of the child facing multiple displacements. Although the text under the illustration states, “He wore European clothes for the first time and began his journey on a steamship” (50), the reader can assess this aspect from the picture itself. Not only do the clothes dwarf the child making his youth even more apparent, but they also communicate the unfamiliarity of brand new things as the boy’s two-handed grip on the hat upon his head indicates. The cultural displacement the grandfather faces becomes clear in the oversized, new, unfamiliar clothes. Say also introduces a more subtle form of displacement—an interior displacement of the child within the adult; the boyish grandfather can represent the nervousness and the excitement of the young man embarked on his journey.

The frequently occurring nature of the interstitial space and its ability to appear in ordinary prosaic moments of life reveal that displacement happens on a regular basis; in Say’s work, the prevalence of displacement makes it almost as common as placement. The ordinariness of displacement creates another element of interest—one can face displacement in the midst of many. In *Grandfather’s Journey*, for instance, the reader can understand that more people will be on the ship even if they do not appear in the illustration. The illustration offers an even more subtle form of creating an unseen group of people around the grandfather. The manner in which Say positions the grandfather on the boat alone at the railing makes it seem as if the boyish figure is posing for a camera, and in this instance, it would be the reader who would be the one holding the camera. Say draws the reader into the discourse of displacement in one of the most intimate of manners; the reader can either identify with the boyish grandfather’s displacement or view it as “other.” In either case, one would hope that this discourse would create new understanding and empathy for the placeless.

The Interstitial Space Creates Knowledge

One of the key frustrations that the child protagonist faces in *Tree of Cranes* lies in his inability to understand what his mother’s rather secretive actions mean. When the child stands in his wooden bathtub, for instance, the scene epitomizes multiple forms of displacement. The wooden tub, almost like a boat, forms another interstitial space, and the child looks through the large glass panes on the closed doors at the shadowy, disappearing form of his mother. The child’s distress, although subtle, clearly comes across to the reader. This situation changes when the mother includes the child in her own interstitial space and explains her actions to him. In the first illustration where the boy and mother communicate, the mother turns her face to the boy, and her expression shows no displeasure. Their communication and the boy’s inclusion into his mother’s plan become apparent in many ways. Although Say draws the boy’s face almost completely turned toward the mother, the reader can see that the boy has an animated expression and has his mouth open as he talks to his mother. Another form of connection between the boy and his mother transpires through the paper cranes that the mother has made. The mother has already hung two of the cranes on the tree and has a third held up close to one of the lower branches of

² In an interview about the making of *Grandfather’s Journey*, Say explains one reason for the youthfulness of the grandfather; he states, “For the last illustration of the book – the one of the framed photograph – I had initially planned to show the grandfather as an old man, but that seemed too logical and ordinary. One day I was lying on my studio floor, doing yoga and waiting for inspiration, when I saw pinned on the wall the original rough sketch of the first picture – the one of the young man in a kimono. The face is loosely modeled after me as a boy...” (Say, *Horn Book Magazine*, 30)

the tree. The boy holds another paper crane in his hand, and although the boy sits on his bed, he has clearly joined his mother in decorating the tree. The next illustration portrays the boy taking a more active role in trimming the tree; his face displays intense concentration as he stands in front of the tree and lights the candles on it. This time the mother sits in the background gently smiling and watching her son. While the two figures do not vocally communicate, the picture brings in their shared purpose and enjoyment. The Madonna and child picture follows, and the close connection between the two that arises from sharing the interstitial space brings in a moment of understanding and insight to the boy. The boy states: “She was remembering. She was seeing another tree in a faraway place where she had been small like me” (Say, *Tree* 24). The illustration certainly does bring up the idea of the memory; it speaks to Say’s artistry that the expressions on the characters’ faces show them both gazing at the tree *and* thinking of ideas that the sight of the tree conjures. Similarly, the idea of the close resemblance between mother and child in the little boy’s statement (“where she had been small like me”) comes vividly through in the illustration. Say portrays a compelling likeness between the boy and his mother through their facial features and expressions. The child not only has new knowledge created through the shared experience of the interstitial space, but he has also taken on some of the mother’s heritage, her genetic and cultural traits.

A similar attainment of knowledge occurs for the child narrator of *Grandfather’s Journey*. The first illustration that portrays the boy and his now-appropriately-aged grandfather together depicts both figures facing forward standing on a rounded stone that makes a pathway in a garden. Through the positioning of the man and boy, Say again manages to create the effect that they are posing for a photograph. The grandfather leans over the boy, holds onto his shoulders and looks straight ahead, smiling. The boy stands straight, rather stiffly for a child, and looks slightly to the left. The idea of posing for a camera once again invites the reader into discourse with the characters: What makes this particular spot so important it becomes camera/picture worthy? The rough hewn stones of the pathway and the lack of distinguishing marks in the background make this scene one of Say’s typical interstitial locations. The boy’s shyness and hesitation (seen in his glancing away and posture) suggest unfamiliarity with the grandfather but not an unwillingness to be with him. Likewise, the grandfather’s smile and the gentle nature of his hold on the boy reveal affection and excitement. Whether the two stand at the beginning of the winding stone path, at its middle, or end, the illustration conveys the development of a relationship that has begun between the two figures. In a later illustration which once again seems to be a formal pose for a camera or portrait, the figure of the grandfather and the grandson change positions. The grandfather now sits, and the boy stands behind him with his hands placed gently on the grandfather’s shoulders. The older man has a more solemn expression while the boy has a smile. The boy has grown taller and the grandfather older; the passage of time marks the continuation and intimacy of their relationship. In a manner similar to the boy and his mother in *Tree of Cranes*, the boy in *Grandfather’s Journey* begins to exhibit signs of physical similarity to the grandfather which was not the case in the illustration of the two on the path. This new resemblance that the boy takes on suggests the subtlety of new cultural knowledge. The boy begins to *look* like the grandfather and then the boy begins to *behave* like the grandfather; the boy begins to embark on his own journeys to the places his grandfather loved. The final picture shows the boy, now a young man, standing by himself not in front of the railing of a ship, but in front of a wall behind which are some palm trees. The knowledge and

experience which the boy has gained from his grandfather help the boy strike a more confident pose than the grandfather did on the ship.

Hall's distinction between fixed cultural identity and the more fluid cultural identity that builds on differences acknowledges the role history plays in both types of identity, and this historical context takes great importance in these narratives. In both *Tree of Cranes* and *Grandfather's Journey* the narratives provide a familial history which influence the subject formation of the protagonists. In *Tree of Cranes* knowledge of the mother's American past changes the little boy, while in *Grandfather's Journey*, the grandson's growing understanding of his grandfather inspires the younger man to make a similar journey between cultures, and like his grandfather, the grandson, too, becomes displaced. Another historical context also comes into play with the mention of World War II, and while not explicit, this reference to World War II brings in the tension and animosity between Japan and the United States, especially when the grandfather's Japanese house is destroyed because of the war. The grandfather's desire to return to California and the grandson's choice of emulating his grandfather by travelling to California consequently incorporate the negatives of this political history into their familial history. With this historical backdrop, the displacement both characters face between Japanese culture and American culture subsequently has added poignancy.

The Interstitial Space Creates the New Displaced Subject

In *Tree of Cranes*, the little boy's closeness with his mother does not extend through the remaining narrative, but a subtle change occurs in his ensuing displacement. Two objects, the decorated pine tree and the little boy's kite, represent the interior change that occurs in the boy. The pine tree that the mother digs up from the garden and pots has special significance; the boy explains, "It was the little pine Mama and Papa had planted when I was born, so I would live a long life like the tree" (Say, *Tree* 18). Certainly, the tree will not grow in the pot, and the boy exhibits his fears for the tree at different points in the text. The mother's choice of the tree, however, proves of interest. The narrative makes clear that the mother wishes to share something of herself with her son in her celebration of Christmas, and so she picks the tree that has the closest bond with him. Likewise, when she decorates the tree, she imparts some of her own identity to this tree, an American identity which so far has not figured in her child's life. When the little boy begins to trim the tree himself, he now appropriates some of her previously sequestered cultural experience for himself. This act coupled with the new knowledge the boy gains about his mother's childhood and identity creates a new subject: the little boy now carries some of the mother's interior displacement within him. The outward embodiment of this new subject lies in another powerful interstitial object that Say structures in to his narrative—the kite. A kite has its own form of unique "in-between-ness" perhaps best exemplified in the tenuous bridge it can make between earth and sky. The kite has a direct relation to the tree and the mother's American heritage because it represents the Christmas tradition of gift giving. The kite, however, also represents Japanese culture since it has the shape and image of a traditional Japanese warrior. Say neatly incorporates both traditions into the interstitial form of the kite.

In *Grandfather's Journey*, Say expresses the displacement the boy narrator experiences once he has connected with his grandfather and gained new cultural knowledge. A closer look at the illustration in which the narrator appears as a young man standing by a wall brings out this

displacement. While the narrator's western clothes fit him much better than the grandfather's new clothes fit the grandfather, Say introduces a strange quality to the narrator's clothes. The white of the narrator's trousers almost blend in with the white wall of which he stands in front, and although the blue of his jacket is a different shade than the blue Say uses in the sky, the similarity between the narrator and his background is striking. While the written text informs the reader that the narrator stands in California, the illustration offers one of the most nondescript portrayals of California despite the grandfather and narrator's love for the state. Whereas in *Tree of Cranes* Say links the boy's third-culture displacement to the kite, in *Grandfather's Journey*, Say blends the interior displacement the narrator experiences with the external environment. The nondescript portrayal of California does not indicate a lack of appreciation for the state, but instead refuses to make the location into a fixed identity. The narrator mirrors his grandfather's displacement to such an extent that California becomes in essence displaced itself—the narrator views it through his grandfather's eyes. The palm trees in the background offer almost a stereotypical reference to the state, yet the palm trees could also represent other locations in America, Hawaii or South Carolina. Comparing the earlier picture of the grandfather on the steamship with the later illustration of the narrator by the wall reveals the bright colors and well-defined lines of the former and the more muted colors and indistinct lines of the latter. The narrator certainly displays more confidence than the grandfather, but the blurry "vision" of California suggests that the narrator has an even more "distilled," displaced experience than his grandfather had.

Loss, Longing, Belonging, and Home

Initially, Say's resolution to the questions in identity that third-culture displacement creates may seem neat without any loose ends, but a closer examination of his narratives' resolutions proves otherwise. In *Tree of Cranes*, for instance, the boy's joyous rhapsody over the kite ("Only a kite! The one I'd always wanted!" (Say 28)) does not materialize into flying the kite. When the boy steps outside, he discovers the earth blanketed with snow—a day not suited for flying a kite. The boy can make a snowman as his father suggests, and the last illustration of the book indeed displays a snowman (another complicated interstitial object), but a sense of loss makes its way into the narrative. The mother is correct when she consoles the boy by saying, "'There'll be another day [...] A fine windy day with no snow'" (Say, *Tree* 30), but the text also implies that not every day will be a windy day fit for flying a kite. The mother's own memories of her childhood cannot find expression all the time even if it can have special moments such as the Christmas tree; the intentional, forceful, act of creating the tree speaks to her loss and longing. The boy's interstitial subject, likewise, suffers this same type of stifling even while it revels in the new enriching relationship he shares with his mother. I believe this lack of closure in the text strengthens it; the open-endedness perhaps better describes the more indefinable aspects of interstitial displacement.

This ongoing, imperceptible nature of third-culture displacement appears again in *Grandfather's Journey*. Toward the end of the story, the child-turned-adult narrator explains that his own life emulates his grandfather's rather nomadic longings; the narrator states, "So I return now and then, when I can not still the longing in my heart. The funny thing is, the moment I am in one country, I am homesick for the other" (Say, *Grandfather* 31). This paradoxical nature of the interstitial state problematizes the concept of home for third-culture subjects. If the

grandfather and the boy experience displacement both in Japan and California, home cannot be found in a fixed location or a location that only represents “one” aspect of the third culture, as multi-cultural as Japan or California may be. The narrator’s homesickness stems from the impossibility of recreating his internal displacement in an external home and the difficulty of establishing roots when no one place represents identity.

With what political and/or cultural position do Say’s narratives ultimately leave the child reader? To answer that question, I believe Anand Giridharadas makes some useful points when he discusses displaced individuals whom he terms as the “global placeless.” Giridharadas pertinently observes that the global placeless are growing in numbers, but comments “yet the placeless still find themselves colliding with a place-bound world” (n.p.). Giridharadas notes that while the wealthy placeless have means to relieve some of the pain of not belonging or feeling rootless, for the lower socio-economic groups being placeless has dire consequences, “Mexican laborers are encouraged to work in the United States but chased away by armed vigilantes. In India, northern migrants to coastal, cosmopolitan Mumbai are beaten by armed cadres of a sons-of-the-soil political movement” (n.p.). Admittedly weighty material for a discussion with a child after reading a picture book, but still a worthwhile discussion. Giridharadas also explains another coping mechanism of the placeless: “in the case of someone like the artist Youngjoo Cho, a native of South Korea who studied in Paris and divides her time between Berlin and Seoul, they use art to soothe the unease of not belonging” (n.p.). Tellingly, Say, in his art, through his discourse on displacement, placement and the problematic nature of the home poignantly textualizes the “longing of his heart” and offers opportunities for the reader (child or adult) to directly engage with this discourse through the act of reading image and text.

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